

# THE GUIDING LIGHT



# **THE GUIDING LIGHT**

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## Foreword

The story of Carver's life is at once beautiful, dignified and simple. The biographies of great men and women move us, but none moves us so deeply and so profoundly as the touching story of a little Negro boy who grew up to be such a remarkable man—a genius in every sense of the term.

Like most great men, he was essentially childlike and simple. His life was a perfect blend of the spiritual, the artistic and the scientific.

Three things stand out like beacons in the life of Carver—his selfless service to mankind, his capacity for hard work, and his intense faith in God. His unshakable faith in God made him turn again and again to Him like one quenching one's thirst at a never-ending fountain.

He took the simple gifts of Nature and turned them into marvels and miracles of science to feed millions of hungry people. He sought perfection in whatever he was doing, be it a field he was ploughing, a piece of canvas on which he was painting, a song that he was singing, a meal that he was cooking or a product that he was experimenting with in his laboratory. His zeal to find new ways of doing things, his inventive genius and capacity for innovation were extraordinary.

Yet he was a poor ragged orphan to begin with, who starved most of the time, who worked through school and college by sheer grit and determination! To question how this Negro youngster of humble origins achieved so much is like asking how a flower blooms among the craggy wastes, opening its loveliness and beauty for the world to see.

Fame and honour in later life did not change this simple man. His one goal in life was to make the world a better place to live in and he spent all his life trying to achieve this lofty aim.

The story of his life reveals the victory of the human spirit over all obstacles of colour, race, poverty, and prejudice. In our own time, when the world is racked by dissensions of colour, caste, and racial hatreds, Carver's life has deep relevance.

And how long will it be before men shake off narrow prejudices and hatreds and attain the kingdom of God! Till such time, all education will be a farce and life a mockery of what it is meant to be!

If after reading this book, some little heart is stirred somewhere, and finds inspiration and guidance, then my book shall have carried its message.

*Prema Ramakrishnan*

George Washington Carver was born in 1864 near Diamond, Missouri. He was the younger of two boys born to Negro slave parents who worked on a farm. The farm was owned by a German immigrant couple, Moses and Susan Carver. When George was a baby, his father was killed in an accident in a nearby plantation. Shortly after that, he and his mother Mary were kidnapped by raiders. These gangs used to roam the countryside looking for slaves to be sold at big profits.

George was a frail child and was suffering from whooping cough. The raiders abandoned him on the way. He was found by someone whom Moses Carver had hired to trace Mary and the child. The man could not find Mary, but he brought back George and handed him to the Carvers. Moses was very happy with him and gave him a race-horse in reward.

Moses and Susan Carver never forgot that terrible winter night when Mary's baby was brought to them. They loved Mary, who had worked so hard and so willingly for them. They treated her as a trusted member of the household. When she was kidnapped, they were very unhappy. And now, here was Mary's baby, almost frozen with cold, gasping for breath, more dead than alive!

Susan Carver stared at the tiny baby bundled up in rags. Her only thought was that the child should live! She held him before the hearth to warm his frozen body. Outside, a blizzard was blowing and the snow was a foot deep. Terrible fits of cough racked the tiny body. The whooping cough had become worse because of exposure to the cold.

As Susan Carver prayed, she fed the baby little droplets of milk. At first he did not drink at all—later, as warmth returned to his body, he sucked greedily, took a hold on life and survived. Susan Carver's



eyes were full of tears as she held the baby to her through the night, softly calling out his name and praying all the time.

She was childless and soon came to love the baby as if it were her own. With her gentle nursing and loving care the baby grew up. George's elder brother Jim, a strong well-built youngster, also lived with the Carvers. Moses Carver had been able to hide him when the raiders came. Jim was of great help on the farm; being sturdy he could do a lot of work.

In the beginning, George was too small and weak to be of much help. He looked pathetic with his spindly little arms and legs. It seemed that he would never grow. He was always ill; he could hardly walk a few steps without falling. He couldn't talk properly, for the whooping cough had damaged his vocal chords. All he could manage at first was a few squeaking noises and a stammer.

But what stood out in his little dark face were his eyes; enormous shining eyes that seemed to miss nothing.

In spite of his weak health, George was willing to do any work given to him. While Jim worked with Moses Carver on the farm, George pottered about the kitchen trying to help Susan Carver. And Susan Carver was a gentle and kind mistress. She understood him well.

How curious he was, and oh! so eager to learn everything! If he saw her knitting, he would watch her at work, rapt. 'Why can't I do that?' he would ask himself and off he would scamper to the backyard to look for turkey feathers. Picking two of them, he would pluck off the feathers, leaving a tuft at the end, and would proudly go back to Aunt Susan with his own knitting needles! Unravelling some wool out of an old sock or mitten, he would happily sit down to knit!

If he saw her crocheting, he would borrow her needles and begin to crochet. His designs? All borrowed from leaves, flowers and ferns. Nature's designs were so perfect, so geometric—the most fantastic patterns he had ever seen!

George had magic in his hands! Susan Carver was convinced of that. If she sat down to spin wool or flax for clothing, sure enough, there was George right there beside her to push the treadle. And how he enjoyed helping her!

She taught him to cook and very soon he was baking corn-bread, humming happily to himself. She taught him to wash, and mend, and George learnt everything. It never struck him that these were women's chores!

By and by he was able to help on the farm too.

The homestead consisted of a hundred and forty acres of good farm land. There was plenty to do for all of them. They worked from dawn to dusk, come spring, summer, autumn or winter.

They were up at the crack of dawn to begin the day's task. It was back-breaking work all right. The horses, pigs and poultry had to be fed, the cows had to be milked, the deer-skin had to be tanned, shoes had to be made. There was cloth to weave, candles and soaps to make. Trees had to be hacked and the logs split for firewood.

Corn, flax and hemp had to be grown, and vegetables planted, picked and cooked. Fruit trees needed pruning, the fruits had to be plucked, dried and made into jam. Hazelnuts, pecans, and butternuts had to be picked. Milk had to be churned, and cheese made. Venison and bacon had to be cured, lard had to be made—and if someone fell ill, roots had to be dug up, and the herbs gathered and brewed into medicine. Animals that were sick needed looking after too; cloth was dyed, and the dyes were extracted from oak-bark, hickory and walnut!

Except for coffee and sugar, the farm was self-sufficient in everything. George helped all he could, and how clever he was! Moses Carver marvelled at the boy's intelligence.

George understood everything that was told to him. He had a quick grasp and an excellent memory. He was glad to work, and these were happy, carefree times for him.

There was plenty of food too, good wholesome food, fresh from the farm. Though there was so much to eat, nothing was wasted. The German couple taught George his first lessons in thrift and hard work, and these lessons lasted a lifetime.

Carver's farm prospered. The barns were well stocked. The fields turned green and beautiful. And little George watched the world with wonder-struck eyes!

Days passed by happily for George, on the homestead. Not only was he clever with his hands, but he also discovered his special gift of growing things and curing sick plants. Susan Carver's garden was getting to be the talk of the neighbourhood. Her sweetpeas, geraniums and yellow roses were beautiful. George had been tending them, gently crooning over them.

Susan wondered if he was talking to them. What were they whispering to him?

What came to farmers through dogged experience came instinctively to the little boy. "Isn't he a real wizard?" asked Susan Carver. Well, he was.

Once, Moses Carver was hoping for a good crop from his apple tree. George, by just looking up at the tree, had guessed that something was wrong with it. He hacked off a particular branch. The farmer was appalled, until the boy showed him the bugs crawling on the branch.

Moses Carver shook his head in amazement. "But how did you know? And from a distance?" he asked in utter disbelief.

"God told me to look and I did!" said George simply.

"Well, I never!" cried the farmer shaking his head, bewildered.

People stopped by to ask for advice—Mrs. Baynham wanted to know why her roses were not as pretty as Susan's. Susan Carver said proudly, "It's all George's doing. He knows plants so well."

"Why are my ferns dying, George?" Somebody wanted to know. George knew why the ferns were sick and needed looking after. He dug them up and took them to his secret place in the woods where he nursed his plants. He took the ferns back to the owner in the fall, green, refreshed and healthy.



To George, plants were like sick children. They needed gentleness and tenderness.

Some plants needed sunshine, others needed shade. Some thrived in water, others required sandy soil. And as he looked after them, he began to ask questions.

What makes the grass green? What makes sunflowers yellow and wild roses pink? If he grew a yellow rose by a pink one, would the colours mix? Why are the leaves shaped so differently?

Often, when George sat down with Aunt Susan to sew, she told him all about his mother. She was just like him, said Aunt Susan. "Your mother was quick and sharp!"

"Will my mother come back?" asked George eagerly.

"Not likely," she said softly.

George needed a place where he could be all by himself. The ideal place he found was the woods that stretched at the back of the house. This wonderland of growing, living things was his secret plot for nursing ailing plants.

On Sundays when he had no work to do, he quietly crept there and sat rapt, watching everything around him with wide-eyed wonder. Here was a shrub that thrived in the shade, and there was a flower reaching out for the sunshine. As he sat and listened, they seemed to be telling him a hundred things.

Birds sang on the tree tops, squirrels and rabbits scampered among the grass. What a magical, complex world nature was! The earth was like a box of treasures and he wanted to open it and peek into its mysteries!

He lifted the decaying leaves to watch the new flowers striving to come up. He stripped off moist pieces of bark and watched the insects crawl. He watched birds building their nests. He broke the earth with his fingers feeling its warmth, its fragrance enveloping him. How he loved the wet earth! A handful held all of nature's secrets.

The birds, the plants and flowers were his only playthings and he

loved them all tenderly; what magic, what mystery did all creation contain? What a wonderful place Ozark Hills was for a boy like George, alive to the sights and sounds of every living thing!

The long days of spring were happy days for him, as he watched, in breathless wonder, a thousand buds breaking into blossoms on the apple tree, sniffed the air heavy with the fragrance of wild, sweet-scented flowers, and felt the warmth of the golden sun embrace the whole valley.

Instinctively, he felt that there was a spirit, a force that guided everything. These were his first thoughts of God. He wanted to know so much, find out so much. Where could he find the answers to all his questions?

“You must go to school,” said Susan.

“Yes, but what will a Negro do with education?” asked Moses.

Susan could not answer that, but she knew that George would have to go to school. “God makes no mistakes,” she said quietly.



Hermann Jaegar was a Swiss farmer. He had given the other farmers around Ozark Hills vine saplings, as the climate of the place was ideal for growing grapes. Of all the people, George alone had fully understood the Swiss farmer's instructions. It was no wonder that Carver's vineyards were the best in the neighbourhood.

One day, Moses Carver had work in Neosho with Hermann Jaegar. He went there by cart, taking George with him.

George was delighted. This was his first trip outside the homestead and he was thrilled with everything. Neosho was not pretty, since it was a mining town. It was full of dust, bleak and cheerless.

'Why don't people plant some flowers at their doorsteps? It would brighten up the place!' he thought to himself.

But George was quite unprepared for what he was going to see. Hermann Jaegar's place was beautiful—the vineyards stretching far into the blue hills. George had never seen such a sight. He stared!

Even the glasshouse was a splendid sight. Here, he could actually see growing things! His gasp of astonishment startled the Swiss farmer, who observed the little black boy's face. "Who is he?" he asked.

"He is the boy who looks after my vine saplings," said Carver. "He's a wizard with plants!"

Hermann was beside the boy. He took George's hands in his own and studied his fingers.

"By God!" he exclaimed. "He has the hands of a grower—the touch that brings life!"

He took George around his place explaining everything to him. "You know so much already," he said kindly. "You must learn to read and write, then the earth will open up its secrets to you."

George listened with rapt attention. The Swiss farmer continued,

"All the fields, the vineyards and the hills beyond it belong to God—and that God is your Father."

George could not speak. His heart was full. Everything he had dreamed of, the good farmer was putting into words. So there was a God, wasn't there? What a comforting thought it was to the little Negro orphan. And God would guide him! He no longer felt lonely.

Hermann Jaegar gave George a small book on plants. "Read this," he said. "Read all the books you can."

To Moses Carver, the Swiss farmer said, "You must put the boy in school!"

When they went back to Diamond Grove, George's head was filled with dreams of going to school. He pestered Moses Carver, "Uncle Moses, when can I go to school?"

Moses Carver's heart bled. He did not like to break the truth to little George. There was just one school in the neighbourhood—Locust Grove School—and it did not admit Negroes!

When George understood this fact, he ran away to the woods to hide his disappointment and hurt. His eyes were full of tears.

Why? Oh! why couldn't he go? Was it because his skin was black? Did it matter so much what colour his skin was? Was he any different from Uncle and Aunt? It was true they had a white skin! But he could do everything they did! He reasoned and argued. Aren't the flowers different in colour, still are they not all flowers?

Susan Carver fished out an old speller from a trunk and taught George how to read. Moses Carver taught him some simple sums. Soon he was able to repeat the speller by heart! This was a beginning but it was not enough. There was so much to learn. He would have to leave Diamond Grove and go to Neosho which had a school for coloured children.

Jim was angry. "Why do you want to know so much?" he asked. He was the happy-go-lucky type and glad to remain with the Carvers.

"You are happy here," Jim continued. "You can read a little."

“But that is not enough,” persisted George stubbornly. “I want to know a lot—I want the answers to all my questions!”

Jim shook his head in despair. He could not understand all that nonsense. But he knew one thing about his tiny brother. If he had made up his mind, nobody could stop him. Moses Carver wondered how George would manage.

But George was full of hopes. “I can c-cook. I can t-tend fires. . . .” he stammered. Well, there was no way of stopping him. Besides, Susan realised well that George was not an ordinary child.

So, one fine day, George set off. Susan Carver had got him ready for the journey. She cut and trimmed Moses Carver’s clothes to fit George.

He even wore the farmer’s shoes! All his little belongings were tied up in an old shawl—two apples, a few coins, two precious books (the speller and the book on plants) and a penknife!

There were tears in Susan Carver’s eyes. She loved the little boy, and she knew the obstacles a negro had to face in the wide, wicked world around him. She wiped away her tears quickly.

Well, she had known that George would have to go. He had to know so much and ‘God made no mistakes’. She took a deep breath. She was confident that he would be able to stand on his feet—he was an excellent housekeeper. “Go to some big house and tell them you can cook,” she said.

“Take care of your money,” said Moses Carver. “Be sure they pay you for your work!”

George nodded. He would remember everything. He turned, waved good-bye, and set off grimly on the way, alone and feeling utterly desolate. He was leaving behind the only home he had known.

He shook his head, and wiped his eyes. He had to go, no matter how difficult it was going to be for him. God had plans for him and he must fulfil God’s wishes. He must go to school, that was the first step.

He went on his way, bravely. Neosho seemed so far away, as he dragged his weary feet, tired and hungry. At last he reached it, almost faint and famished. He found a barn and fell, exhausted, into a deep slumber.

George was then fourteen years old, but still quite puny. The barn became his new home. He went to school every morning, returning to the barn at night to sleep. He had got admission into the school for the coloured. The little money he had brought with him took care of the admission fees.

In outsized clothes, he was the funniest looking boy in his class. His high, piping voice was very amusing to the other children and they jeered and poked fun at him. George bore all that in silence, for he had come there with the sole purpose of studying.

In between school hours, he knocked at several doors begging for work. He needed money to feed himself. He needed books, too. All through his school days the spectre of hunger and starvation haunted him. He scrubbed clothes, washed utensils, swept yards, hacked wood, and was willing to do any other odd job in order to support himself. When there was no work he went hungry, but he did not miss a single day at school !

At night, exhausted, he would creep into the barn and sleep on a bed of hay. Winter was so cold, one particular year, that he nearly froze— biting, icy, chill blasts blew all night and George shivered in his threadbare clothes. When the warm spring came, the cold was forgotten like some bad dream. He had survived another winter, that was all that mattered !

The tenacity to cling to life and get past all obstacles was evident even when he was a baby. He had warded off death on that bitter cold winter night, when he was brought back after the kidnapping; Aunt Susan had warmed him before the fire to revive him. Well, George would not let go of life so easily, for God had great plans for him and he must remain alive to fulfil His plans !

School closed in the spring as it was the planting season. Most of the children were at that time needed on the farms to help with the sowing. George set off for Hermann Jaegar's farm, but the Swiss farmer had died and a stranger was there. George's heart was heavy as he came back to the barn and wept himself to sleep.

He must have overslept, for when he woke up, he saw a white man looking down at him. So the barn belonged to him! George was frightened and began to cry out of fear. But John Martin had great sympathy for the poor slaves who had been recently set free and had nowhere to go.

"Don't worry, boy, I shan't hurt you!" he said kindly and taking the boy by the hand he led him in, calling out to his wife. "Lucy, this kid is starving! Get him something to eat!"

For the first time in many months, George sat at a table with the Martins and shared their breakfast. John Martin was the foreman of the flour mill that had just opened at Neosho. He and his wife, Lucy, gladly took in the little boy. They gave George a cot to sleep on, in a shed at the back of the house. John lent him a few of his old clothes. They gave him a table of his own to keep his school books on! Was there a happier boy in all Neosho?

He set at once to clear his shed. Soon it was spick and span, the cot, the table, his books, everything arranged neatly. George vowed he would repay the Martins' generosity. He surprised the young couple by getting up at the crack of dawn to prepare a delicious breakfast. How delighted John and Lucy were!

But that was not all. He gladly took over all the household tasks, cooking, cleaning, and washing! The house was neat as a pin, the linen snow white; the dishes gleamed.

"You are a wizard!" exclaimed the wonder-struck John and Lucy Martin. When George finished the housework and lessons, he would set about cleaning and weeding the garden where he now planted flowers.

Well, there simply wasn't a boy as good as George in all Neosho! John and Lucy Martin considered themselves lucky to have discovered him.

They persuaded him to accept jobs outside, since they themselves were not rich enough to pay him much.

"And you will need the money for your books, George!" said John. It was after a good deal of coaxing that George agreed.

He woke up before the break of dawn, finished all the housework and then set off to do odd jobs around town! By now, his fame had spread and people swore by George. The Martins had told everybody they knew about the exceptionally clever boy!

At school, nobody laughed at him anymore. He studied hard, and everyone admired and respected him!

When Lucy Martin fell ill, George willingly stayed at home to manage the house. At the end of the day, when all the work was over, John sat down to teach George. John Martin was an excellent teacher and George learnt more from him than he ever could have at school.

As ill-luck would have it, the flour mill closed and John Martin was without business. The Martins had no option but to leave Neosho and go to far away California, where an uncle of their's promised John a job. George was very sad, and so were the Martins.

But even as George was wondering what to do, Mariah Watkins, a Negro washerwoman, took him in.

Mariah Watkins and Andy Watkins were a fine couple. They lived in a log cabin. George was very happy in his new home. He was also happy to be among his own people.

George went to school during the day, but in the evenings he helped Aunt Mariah wash clothes. With his book propped above the tub, George studied and washed at the same time. And George could wash so well. He gave the good woman many tips on washing. Mariah was proud of her George! She herself was a wonderful person. She could read and write a little.



She told George, "When you have learnt enough, give it back to the black people. They are starved of a little learning!" George never forgot her words. Uncle Andy, too, was a very gentle soul. George took an instant liking to him. And he pressed George to read the Bible.

In the evenings, when the sun had set, George sat down to read the Bible. He found the passages so beautiful that tears came to his eyes.

He read on, deeply stirred, the words coming effortlessly to him. Had he heard them before?

People came in small crowds to hear him read, and these Bible reading sessions became regular. George's voice had beauty and many who heard him wept openly—what an achievement for a boy who not very long ago could only stammer!

At this time, George met his brother Jim who had come over to visit him. Aunt Mariah was happy to see George's brother. "Are you finding the answers to all your questions?" asked Jim.

"Not yet," said George. "I still have a lot to know."

Jim, too, wanted to go to school but he didn't stay there long. He left soon, taking up a job at Neosho and settling down to work.

George learnt all that the school could teach. Soon he would have to leave school and move on.

He set off for Fort Scott with the love and blessings of the Watkinses. Aunt Mariah gave him a Bible as a parting gift. What a precious thing it was for George!

Once more he was on his way. Just before George left, he and Jim had a photograph of themselves taken together. They also went to Diamond Grove to bid farewell to the Carvers. George reached Fort Scott. He did odd jobs and worked for a time with a Mr. and Mrs. Payne.

Here he excelled in cooking. But he could not continue to cook for ever. When he had collected enough money, he enrolled himself in a school. He also found a cabin to stay in. It cost him a dollar a week. He ate only the most frugal meals. But he studied every book that

came his way. Soon his money finished and he had to find a job again.

He found work at a hotel called "Wilder House"—a lodge for travellers. Here, he set up a 'steam laundry'. Travellers were glad to get their clothes washed and "Wilder House" was filled to capacity.

George saw people come and go. He learnt a lot by just listening. He helped the cook in the kitchen, who in return made sure that George always had enough to eat.

All this time George kept studying hard. While he could read, write and spell, he did not as yet know subjects like History or Geography. But in the Nature class, he amazed the teacher by telling her many things she herself did not know.

Whenever he had time to spare, George made sketches. But he felt cramped in Fort Scott and wanted to roam over wide open fields. He remembered the blue Ozark Hills, the green vineyards stretching for miles and miles. He drew sketches of them.

The Drawing teacher, who happened to see his sketches, was astonished. He became her favourite pupil. At Christmas she gave a small box of crayons as a gift to the budding artist! George was too happy for words! However, one day he saw a Negro being lynched by a crowd. Horrified, he hid himself. It could happen to him.

He fled from Fort Scott. From then on, he roamed the west, upto Denver, back to Kansas, Paola, Olathe, Minneapolis, living among strangers, not knowing where he would eat the next meal, not knowing where he would sleep in the night, trying all the while to catch up with his schooling. On many days, he went hungry.

He felt miserable, haunted by the picture of the Negro who was burnt alive. He dreamed of better times. He dreamed of his mother, hoping to meet her some day.

He grew up to be six feet tall, though slightly stooped, because he was always bending over tubs to wash and scrub. Later he got over his stammer, though his voice remained high and piping.

He worked for a time as an assistant to a barber named Nat. Proud

of him, Nat showed him off to everybody. Soon he joined a rail-road gang and set off as a cook. Then he joined a group of migrants to New Mexico.

George roamed the Mexican deserts and studied the soil there. The fierce sun scorched relentlessly all day. At night he slept tired and exhausted, drained of all energy by the heat. At this time, he made sketches of the exotic desert plants and flowers. One such painting, done on a piece of crumpled paper, of the giant 'Yucca Gloriosa', later won a prize at the World's Columbian Exposition.

He lived for a time in Olathe with the Seymours, another black couple. Here also he was useful. He helped Aunt Lucy who took in the washing of the neighbourhood. Uncle Seymour was a Presbyterian and deeply religious. George went to their church with them. But he was happy to go to any other church as well, if its doors were open to him.

George went to school and for the first time he made a large number of friends. He was happy again. He set up his own laundry to support himself. He learned to play on the accordion and amused the local boys by playing popular numbers. He won the "best liked boy" elections. He took part in dramas and had a flair for acting. He usually took a girl's part because of his high, reedy voice.

He chose Washington as his middle name, so as not to be confused with another George Carver. But he always signed as George W. Carver.

When he was just completing High School, news came from Aunt Mariah that his brother Jim had died of smallpox.

George sat down silently—the letter in one hand and the photograph of him and Jim that they had got taken, in the other. Jim had always been the tough one, the strong healthy one—but he was dead! George wept — he was now alone in the wide, wide world.

High school was over now. He applied for admission to a college at a small town called Highland in the northeast corner of Kansas.

A letter from the college said that his grades were good and they would be glad to take him.

How delighted George was! Big Nat boomed the news to everyone. "Can you imagine?" he told all his customers. "Our George has made it! He will be going to college!"

George spent the summer holidays learning typing and shorthand. He took up a job at a telegraph office, typing messages from 6 p.m. until midnight. Before leaving for Highland, he went to Neosho to visit Jim's grave. He stood by the grave, sad and solemn. The plain wood marker said: "Born 1859, Died 1883". George sighed. That was all that remained of his happy-go-lucky brother.

He went to meet the Watkins. Aunt Mariah and Uncle Andy were thrilled to see him. They wept. Their eyes filled with tears of joy. How proud they were of their George!

He visited the Carvers, too. How much he had to tell them! How they rejoiced in all his achievements! Soon, the news of his arrival spread through the neighbourhood. People trooped in to see their little black boy. Was he going to college? What an unheard of thing!

George went round the Carver farm, supervising, examining, giving tips on how to improve everything. Moses Carver nodded in awe and wonder.

He cooked delicious Mexican dishes for the old couple. He went to the woods to rediscover his childhood delights. At night he slept in his mother's log cabin. It was cool in the summer and the soft breeze made him feel at peace there. He felt happy but missed the mother he had hardly known. Soon it was time to pack his bags and leave. Moses Carver was astonished.

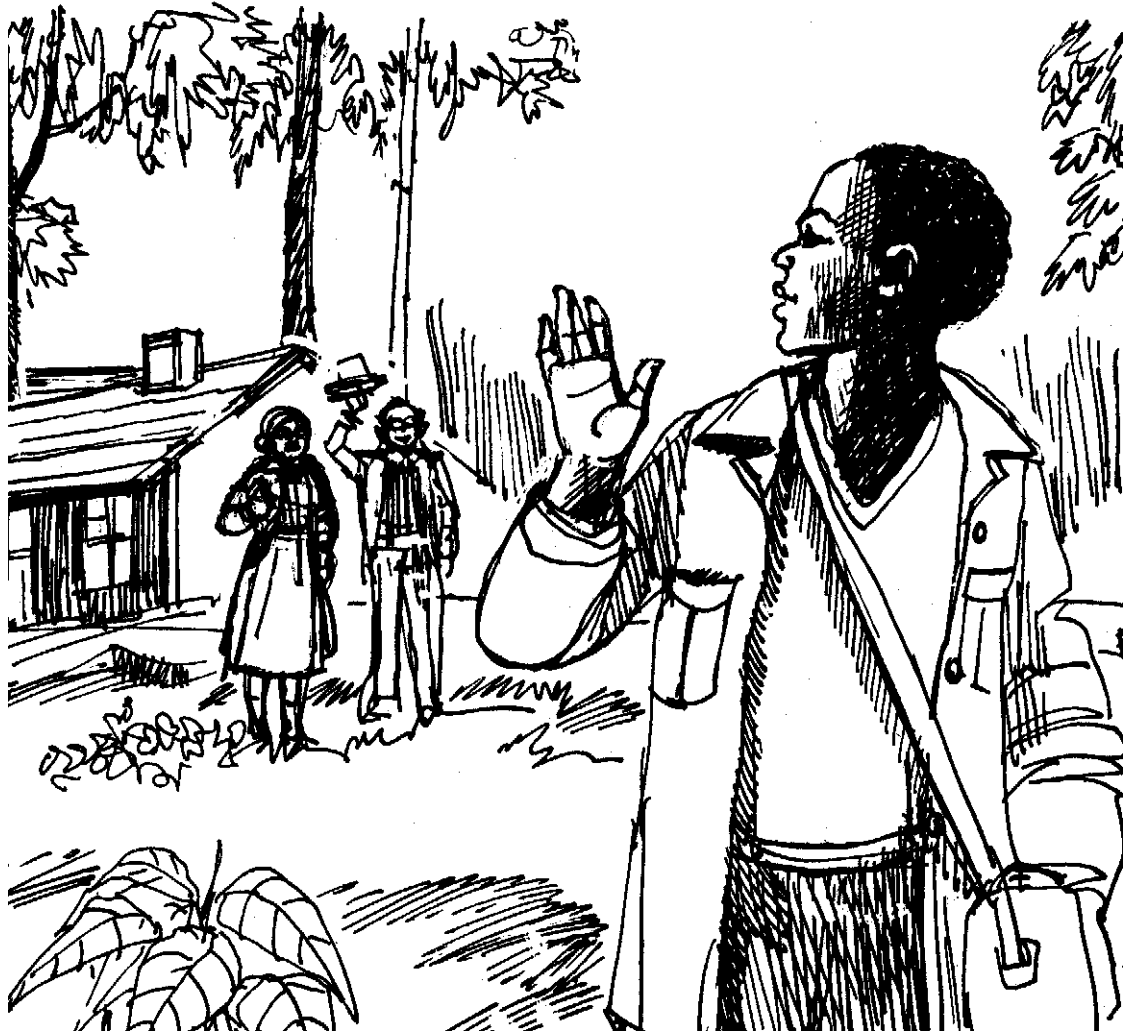
"Why do you want to study further?" he asked. "There are no colleges for Negroes!"

George laughed. "I have so much more to learn," he said, "only then will God open up his secrets to me!"

Susan Carver repeated, "God makes no mistakes!"

The Carvers bade him good-bye. Were they not proud of their George? Susan Carver's heart swelled with pride at the sight of him, so full of confidence, poise, and charm. She remembered him as the little baby that she had nursed back to life that cold January night.

How far he had come, her little boy! And he would go further, of that she was sure!



In September, his heart full of hopes, George was on the train to Highland. He was happy to be enrolled at the college. His dream was about to come true.

But the Principal had not known that George was a Negro.

"There is a mistake," he said. "This college does not admit Negroes!"

George stared, unable to understand. As far as he knew, he had filled in all the forms. Nowhere was it mentioned that they did not admit Negroes.

The Principal looked at the intense young man before him. He sensed his keen disappointment. "Why do you want to go to college?" he asked George. "You have done High School. For one of your race, that is good enough."

George got up quietly and went to the door. He said, "Time belongs to God. I am going to college because I have work to do and I must be ready."

He closed the door gently and was gone, leaving behind a baffled Principal.

George walked out, his heart heavy. The sun overhead was warm, but he didn't feel the heat. A chill crept into his heart. For the second time he had been hurt because of the colour of his skin.

His high school record was one of the best and yet there was no place for him! Why? Why? he asked himself in deep anguish. As a child he had hidden in the woods at Diamond Grove once, weeping silently. But now he had no money and nowhere to go. He sat down on a bench, sorting out his thoughts. Well, his dreams were crushed, his hopes dashed to the ground, and time was short.

Gradually George controlled himself. He felt better. May be it was God's will that he wait. He soon fell asleep in a barn that night, out of sheer exhaustion.

His wanderings began with the break of dawn. He heard that the Government was giving land to those willing to till and cultivate it. George took a hundred and sixty acres and was all set to farm. Life was hard in Ness country. Blizzards and the hot, scorching sun made things impossible.

He grew flowers, coaxing them gently to life on the alien soil. He went for long walks, dreaming and planning under the wide open sky. In solitude he was able to shake off his disappointment and grief. He built himself a house. He began to read and paint. He did not want to feel sorry for himself, because it did more harm than good. Work was the best antidote for everything.

He grew cheerful, once again ready to take things in his stride. Life was difficult and he learnt the value of hard work and thrift.

He set off once more on his wanderings. He had become a confident youth, carefree and cheerful. He worked his way to Iowa, taking odd jobs wherever he stopped. When winter set in, he worked as a cook at Schultz Hotel. At the church he met Mrs. Millholland who was the choir-director. She was impressed by George's voice when he sang at the church. So she sent her husband to fetch the shy Negro boy.

George went to their beautiful house. The gleaming furniture included a piano. Mrs. Millholland played it and George listened spell-bound to the stirring strains as they filled the room. For a long time he sat still, deeply moved. When he turned, he caught sight of an unfinished picture. "Do you paint?" asked the boy.

Mrs. Millholland nodded. "I try to, but however hard I try, I never seem to put life in them."

"I'll show you," George whispered, and dabbing paint on a brush he put a few bold strokes, making the picture come alive.

Dr. Millholland watched in surprised silence while his wife gasped in astonishment.

"Oh! George!" was all she could say for a while. Then she suggested that if George taught her how to paint, she would give him music lessons!

"I'd be honoured, ma'am," said George. The lessons went on for many happy afternoons. George made friends with the Millholland children and they too liked him very much.

One day, George summoned up enough courage to tell them of his hopes of going to college and related what had happened earlier. Dan Brown, a nephew of the Millhollands who had come on a visit, suggested that George apply to Simpson College where he was studying.

Simpson College in Indianola was Methodist and it was founded by Old Bishop Mathew, Abraham Lincoln's friend. Negroes were admitted there.

Encouraged, George applied. In the meantime, because he needed money for admission, he took on many odd jobs and saved something.

On September 9, 1890, he set off on foot towards Indianola. Once again he was full of hopes. He was admitted at once, and was so relieved that he forgot his tiredness and hunger.

He wondered if he could find a place to stay. The Principal, Dr. Holmes, said there was an unused shack just off the campus.

Here, George set up his laundry once again. He had to earn money to feed himself. The shack rang with the laughter of the boys, as George amused them with his stories and mimicry.

George painted whenever he found time. For a time he was hoping to make a career of painting, but his teacher Etta Budd, who was very fond of him, dissuaded him. George wanted to know if he wasn't good enough for it. Miss Budd said, "You are very good. You have great talent, but so few artists can make a living out of it and you are....."

"A coloured man," said George. Miss Budd simply nodded.



George continued, "I have always managed to support myself. I can still do it."

"But," Miss Budd said, "will you wash other people's laundry all your life, George?"

"Well, then, what do I do?" asked George.

"I showed your pictures to my father. He's a professor at the Iowa Agricultural College. He thinks you should study agriculture," said Miss Budd. Well, she was right. George would go to Ames to study agriculture.

The Iowa College of Agriculture was one of the best institutions in the country and famous for its agricultural chemistry and botany. George, with his excellent records, got in with ease. The rules did not permit Negroes in the dormitory, but Professor Wilson, the Director of the U.S. Experimental Station, brushed aside all rules and asked George to move into his office!

George did very well. He enrolled for botany, geometry, chemistry, zoology, bacteriology, and entomology. He worked as a janitor, a waiter, and a greenhouse and laboratory caretaker to support himself. He joined in all the college activities. He won a place in the college quartet.

Whenever he had time to spare, he visited the marshy tracts of land beyond the college grounds. He tested the soil, studied the weeds and grasses. Here he met a little boy who was later to become the Vice President of America, Henry Wallace. The boy became an ardent fan of the tall, dignified Negro. Even when he became the Vice President, Henry Wallace remembered George with love and affection.

In 1894, George passed out of college, easily one of the most outstanding pupils. His paintings won him recognition and four of them were hung at an Art Exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition. He was the first Negro to be commissioned Captain in the National Guards.

On graduation day, George won thunderous applause. He was

appointed a member of the Faculty. This was more than anybody could aspire for, white or black!

As a teacher George was liked by the staff as well as the students. He became famous and well-off.

But was Professor Carver happy? Outwardly it seemed so, but often, when he was all by himself, doubts filled his mind. Was this the fulfilment of his life's dream? Was he serving his black people by living in this ivory tower?

He remembered Aunt Mariah's words: "And when you have learnt enough, give it to your black people. They are starved of a little learning." How was he going to serve them and share his knowledge with them? he wondered.

Right about this time he received a letter from another eminent Negro, Booker T. Washington, asking him to come and work at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Alabama was very backward. Most of its people were illiterate. The soil was so poor that no crops would grow. He had heard of Professor Carver's genius. Could he come?

Booker wrote: "I can teach my people to read and write. I have helped them to build a school. But I cannot feed them. So they starve."

Carver packed his bags and left for Tuskegee Institute at once. The Iowa College was sorry to lose him, but they knew they could not keep George. He belonged to his people. His work lay at Tuskegee. The long search was over. The time to unearth Nature's secrets had arrived — the time to put his education to use.

## Fulfilment of a Dream

Carver was going south to Alabama. As his train sped along, he gazed out of the window, studying the landscape. The beautiful, rich green fields of the North passed like a dream — here the poor red and yellow clay soil stretched for miles, broken only by cotton fields. Carver realized that the soil was not as poor as it looked, but years of growing only cotton on it had worn away the top soil.

He saw poor Negro workers, men, women and children, half starved and hungry, staring vacantly at the passing train and then bending over the cotton fields, picking endlessly. The despair in their eyes haunted him. They had been working all their lives, as their parents had in their time, and so would their own children. A life of unending back-breaking labour — that was the lot of a Negro.

Booker received Carver warmly. They took an instant liking for each other. Both were great men working for a common cause — to raise their people from the depth of degradation and poverty.

There was almost nothing to begin with, not even a laboratory. The Institute itself had been put up brick by brick, by Booker and his men. In order to build it, Booker had to teach them how to build bricks! Each building that came up was a labour of love and learning. The task that lay ahead was stupendous. A man with less courage and zeal would have given up in despair, but not a giant like Booker. And now Carver had come to help him.

Carver set to work at once. All his childhood and boyhood had been spent facing challenges and overcoming obstacles. Well, here was the greatest challenge ahead of him, and he was ready for it.

So far, Carver's department of agriculture existed only on paper, Booker told him. He was apologetic. The dairy consisted of a churn under a tree, a few tools, and an old horse. One room could be spared

and this would also be Carver's living quarters. "It will do," said George Carver, rising to the occasion.

Carver went round the school studying the place. On the western side of the school building, space was set apart for the new Agriculture building. Twenty arid acres were provided for farming experiments. Beyond this was a stretch of the bleakest and the most barren land Carver had ever seen.

Carver remembered the green acres of land around Iowa, and the big laboratories with the best equipment. Well, never mind, there was plenty of work here. He had been used to disappointments all his life; he had the rare capacity to absorb all difficulties and turn them into constructive channels!

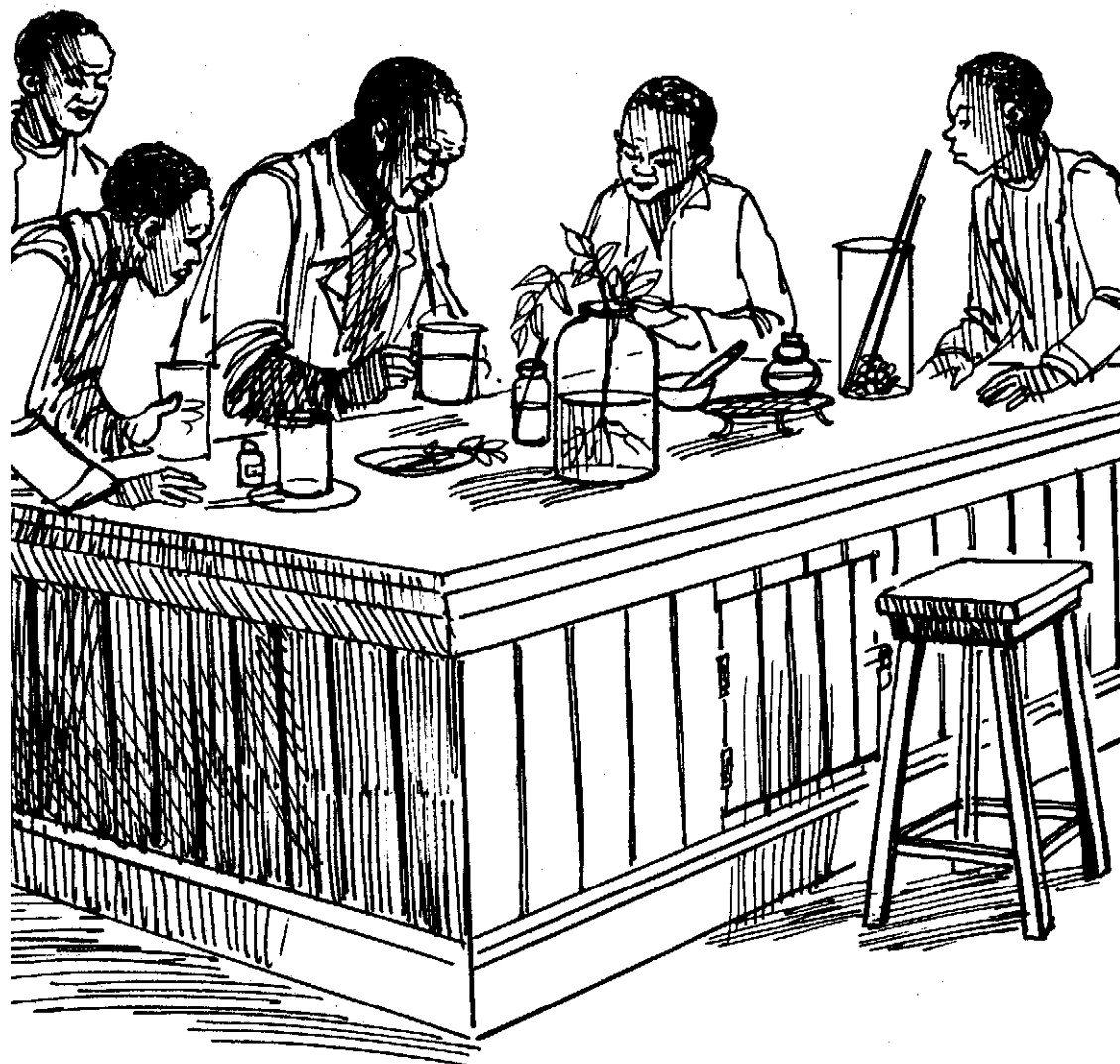
At that time, Agriculture was not a very popular subject. Most of the students were sons of farmers and had contempt for the subject. They came to learn in order to escape working in the fields!

Carver's first task was to change this attitude and win his students' approval. His first lecture took the boys by complete surprise. Here was a professor who did not speak like the others.

He told them that one should keep one's eyes and ears open, for Nature was the best book! "And now, boys," said the Professor, "since we don't have a lab, let us build one!" How was he going to do it? The boys looked at each other amazed.

The Professor led them to the junk heap on the school grounds — a mountain of trash accumulated over months and months. From this were salvaged old bottles, tins, broken cans, jars, pots, and boxes. The boys had no idea what the teacher was doing, but it kept them happy and occupied. Next, he took them from house to house, knocking at several doors and asking for old, discarded things. They went back to the Institute with old lamps, more bottles, and tins.

Carver had all of them cleaned. An old kerosene lantern, with its chimney lamp blackened except for a single pin-hole, provided the strong focus of light for a microscope! An ink bottle with a piece of



string drawn up through the cork as a wick was a Bunsen burner! A teacup became a mortar and a draper rod a pulverizer.

Bottles were cleaned, labelled and filled with chemicals. Tins with holes punched in them became strainers for straining soil samples! The boys were amazed at their teacher's ingenuity. Their respect for him increased overnight. With these old bottles and jars, Carver was ready to rebuild Alabama! All these are in the Carver museum even today.

Next, tracts of ground were cleared, with Carver himself helping. He made the boys gather leaves, leaf-moulds, and droppings from the

barn. The kitchen refuse was buried in a pit to make the best manure. This was mixed with the soil to enrich it.

When the land had been ploughed, the teacher got them to plant cowpeas.

Cowpeas! The boys sniggered. After so much work they had hoped to plant cotton. But no, it was to be cowpeas. The boys felt ashamed and disgusted.

When they came up the cowpeas were so tiny that the boys hung their heads in shame. What was their teacher upto?

But Carver went on. He knew that no progress was achieved without temporary dissatisfaction. In time the boys would understand. He took the cowpeas to the kitchen and cooked a delicious dinner. "Well, that was something!"

Next, he made them plant sweet potatoes. Why not cotton, the boys thought, but they were silent. They got eight bushels of sweet potatoes per acre! The boys looked up in wonder at the teacher. More boys joined his class.

Came spring. He said, "And now, boys, we will plant cotton." A whoop of delight went up from the boys. The Professor explained, "I have been rotating crops. The soil has been enriched, and it is now ready for cotton."

He explained to them the relationship between the soil, fertilizer and growth. "The ground can give back only as much nourishment as there is in it," he said.

The cotton crop was so good that farmers from far and near came to marvel at it. Each acre yielded a five hundred pound bale. Nobody doubted the Professor again! Their respect for him grew.

Soon they were growing enough vegetables for the school's needs. Carver was very busy, working from dawn till late in the night. He tested the soil around Alabama, gathered plant specimens, studied plant and tree life. He spent long hours in the swamps and woods. All of man's requirements can be had from nature, he said again

and again. As long as there is plant life, nobody need starve.

"Even weeds and grasses are rich in vitamins," he said. Many ailing people came to him. He saw that they suffered from malnutrition. He prescribed wild grasses and they all got well.

He started the first mobile school of Agriculture. The Professor knew that in order to reach all his people, he should go out to them. A wagon was got ready. It was fitted with a cream-separator, a milk tester, a one-horse plough, and garden tools.

The wagon went on its way, with the Professor and some of his students. It stopped in front of homes, shanties, market-places. He taught farmers the right way to plough, to build a garden, to prune trees.

He taught ignorant women the essentials of housekeeping. He gave them tips on health and hygiene. He told them simple ways of cooking nutritious meals for their hungry families, nursing, laundering and child-care. He showed them how to use whatever material was available—curtains from flour sacks, rugs from corn shucks and grasses!

"Nothing is waste," Carver reminded them. "All things in nature can be recycled for further use."

This was the first chemurgist speaking. He held many demonstrations. People flocked to listen to him and benefit from his teachings. He fought against age-old methods. He found people steeped in tradition, refusing to change. For instance, the staple diet of the Negro was meat and molasses. He urged them to grow fresh vegetables and include them in their diet, but they were stubborn. They died of pellagra—hidden hunger. Still they refused to change. Carver cut up a wild tomato and popped it into his mouth.

"Look, I am not dead!" he laughed and said, "Tomatoes can prevent scurvy." He took them to the farms on the school grounds where they saw rows upon rows of cabbages, cantaloupes, water-melons, tomatoes and potatoes! Vegetables enrich the soil, he told them. In addition the roots loosen the soil to let in water and air. He taught

them new recipes for their meals. Many who camped with their families on the campus tried the delicious new food. They went back wiser and willing to try.

“Plant yams in ten acres of your fields,” he told them. “They can nourish your bodies, while the vines and peelings will feed your hogs.” Two sweet potato crops would enrich their fields. In the third year if they planted cotton, they would get more than if they grew cotton year after year! Rotation of crops would make the soil more rich.

He asked them to eat fresh fruit every day for better health, wild plums, apples and the like. He taught them to cure meat, to pickle, can and dehydrate vegetables. This way they could ensure supply all the year round. The sun is the best drier, they learnt from him. Sunshine is available in plenty and is free.

Carver fought against waste. He repeated over and over again that wealth can be created out of waste, if people apply their minds to it. Hog fat that was thrown away could be made into soap to last for a year! Sweet potato could be converted into starch. He taught them how to do it. He urged them to plant flowers at their doorsteps to brighten their dismal surroundings.

Gradually people learnt many things—terracing, white washing, rug-making, nursing, cooking, and many odd jobs. A slow revolution was spreading over Alabama. Homes looked cleaner, brighter. People’s faces were once again full of hope. Life had some meaning.

Other States and communities also heard of the mobile school. They were anxious to have their own mobile schools. Could Carver help? Carver sent them instructions and exhibits, sometimes went with them on their first trips.

Carver’s fame spread. Visitors flocked to the Institute and they came from Russia, China, Japan, India and Africa!

Carver considered the mobile school his best and most important work. The unique experiment was of benefit to everybody, black or white.



Peanuts were excellent sources of protein—a handful of them a day would build a healthy body. Carver urged people to grow peanuts and eat them.

But who would eat peanuts? Certainly not people; it was fed only to the hogs! But Carver won over his students and planted peanuts on the campus. When the boll-weevil, a kind of locust, struck, it destroyed all the cotton fields. Field after field of cotton lay rotting in the sun. Carver urged farmers to burn the infested cotton and plant peanuts. The only way to turn away the killer-locust was to plant cowpeas or sweet potatoes or peanuts.

Peanuts were the cheapest of all foods. By growing them they would not only enrich the soil, but become wealthy as well. These nuts contained more protein than even meat. But people were slow to change. Carver cooked a complete meal using only peanuts. Soup, mock cream, mock chicken, creamed vegetable bread, salad and ice-cream. His guests enjoyed the excellent meal but were amazed when they were told that it was all from peanuts.

Carver won. Gradually people planted peanuts in their fields, to keep off the boll-weevil. Carver was delighted, until the farmers came to him with the question, "What do we do with all the peanuts?" There was a glut in the peanut market. Mountains of peanuts were stacked in godowns. Who would buy them? Carver did not know the answer. He had asked them to grow peanuts, and they had.

How were they going to dispose of their large stocks? It was his responsibility to teach them what to do with the peanuts. Tormented by the problem, he went to the swamp. He went there whenever he had a problem on his mind. "To commune with his Creator!" he said. And he posed to God the now famous question: "Mr. Creator, why did you create the peanut?"

He stayed there in the stillness of the evening listening to the voice within himself. Suddenly, seized with an inspiration, he rushed into his laboratory and left word that nobody should disturb him. He

worked all night, in the company of his jars, bottles and test-tubes.

God had shown him the way! Carver created half a dozen products—peanut butter, peanut milk, peanut oil, margarine, soap, and even cosmetics!

He was unmindful of time or the outside world as he worked feverishly in the lab, experimenting, breaking up the nut, grinding it to powder, applying varying degrees of heat to produce an endless array of products: candy flour, ink, dyes, shoe polish, creosote, salve and shaving cream. From the red skin of the nut he produced fine paper, from the hulls he made a soil conditioner, insulating board, and synthetic marble.

Worried students knocked on his door and he told them he was all right. It was as if he was an instrument in God's hands, ready to do His bidding. The great Creator, he said, "has given us three kingdoms—the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral." To these Carver added a fourth—the synthetic kingdom.

His concepts revolutionized industry. Industry did not have to depend upon the forests, he said, but could draw its products directly from the vegetable wastes of the farms. This was the beginning of plastics. The automobile industry was to substitute cellulose for steel!

Today one thousand departments of agricultural science, working in four main laboratories and ten field stations are doing the work Carver did alone and unaided! Grateful to God, he walked out into the early dawn to offer his thanks to his Creator!

Before his death, from peanut alone he made three hundred and twenty-five different products! These included beverages, mixed pickles, wood fillers, and synthetic rubber. Factories manufactured a whole range of products which seemed startling in its variety—mayonnaise, instant coffee, cheese, chilli sauce, shampoo, bleach, axle grease, linoleum, metal polish, wood stains, adhesives, plastics, and wallboard.

Carver said the humble peanut and sweet potato would be enough to sustain man even if all other plant life was destroyed. The

two, between them, had everything to sustain life. Peanut has medicinal properties too, he used to say. Carver really believed that God had a purpose in creating the little peanut.

The peanut industry is a giant industry now, and has changed the economy of the United States—thanks to the vision of one great man.

Then Carver turned to sweet potato.

From sweet potato, he discovered a hundred and eighteen products—breakfast foods, crystallised ginger, to mention only a few. Sweet potato flour mixed with ordinary flour produced a more wholesome and tastier loaf. During war time sweet potato flour was used as a substitute for wheat flour to feed millions of hungry people.

From the cotton stalks he made insulating boards, cordage, paper and rags. He made seventy-five products from pecan and many more from soyabean, cowpea and wild plum.

Here was a genius whose work benefited all mankind.

Hundreds of letters poured into the Institute. Ordinary people, businessmen, industrialists and farmers wrote to Carver for advice. Mud samples and diseased specimens of plants were sent to him and Carver tried to find a solution for every problem.

When some peanut growers of Florida sent a few specimens of their poor crop, Carver told them what was wrong. A cheque for a hundred dollars arrived, but Carver sent it back saying, "God did not charge us for growing peanuts, and I shall not charge for curing them!"

As always it was God who was directing all his work, and he was glad to be an instrument to carry out His great plans.

Peanut milk extracted under Carver's supervision saved hundreds of infants from malnutrition in the jungles of Africa. Farm animals could not be kept there for fear of tigers and deadly flies.

His work had far reaching effects. His life was one of dedication, of continuous giving.

Booker offered Carver a raise in his salary, which he promptly

refused. "What would I do with more money?" he asked.

In July 1908, Carver visited Seneca. He stopped by Jim's grave, called on Mariah Watkins and Uncle Andy.

Then he set off for Diamond Grove to see Moses Carver. Moses Carver was then ninety-six years old.

He was deeply touched by Carver's visit. He remembered the day little George had left—a tiny little fellow he was then!

"We are proud of you!" said Moses Carver shaking his old, wrinkled head. "Aunt Sue and I knew you would go very far." When Carver went back to Tuskegee, he took with him his mother's spinning wheel, which he dusted with love and care every day.

Booker's death was a personal loss for Carver. He stayed on at Tuskegee as he had promised the former Principal.

Carver's Bible class was the best attended extra-curricular activity on the campus.

On Sunday afternoons a few boys went to his room and Carver talked to them of the relationship between science and the scriptures. He had many stories to tell them. More boys joined and soon regular classes had to be held. The group had to move into the Rockefeller Hall. Even the three hundred seats there were always full.

"God is everywhere," he said. "Even in the flower in the lapel! The seed has survived millions of years and may survive another million. Is the miracle of the flower an accident?"

He often told his boys, "Mysteries are things we don't understand because we haven't learnt to tune in. Finding true faith in the Creator is solving the greatest mystery of all."

In 1930, Russia extended an official invitation to him to help them with agriculture in their first Five Year Plan. He sent one of his assistants to help them. Carver wrote forty-four bulletins ranging from "How to Raise Pigs" to "How to Meet New Economic Conditions in the South". In 1942, he wrote a bestseller—"Nature's Garden for Victory and Peace".

Farms and factories and the food industry took up Carver's great work of feeding the hungry, providing hundreds of people with jobs, and earning rich monetary rewards.

As for Carver, he often forgot even to cash his monthly cheques. His salary kept accumulating. And finally most of these cheques went to needy students!

Alabama, once a poor country, was one of the richest now. The one-crop system of growing cotton had completely drained the soil of all nutrients. Now, with Carver's new methods, prosperity returned to the farms.

Carver had a knack of diagnosing plant diseases and prescribing remedial treatment. His fame spread and he became a legend in his lifetime. There was nothing Professor Carver did not know. "Where there is no vision, people perish," he said, holding up a cluster of weeds. "I found these on Stand Pipe Hill. Then I went downtown to the drugstore and bought seven patent medicines, every one of which contained elements found in these plants. The medicines had been shipped from New York City. Why weren't they shipped from Stand Pipe Hill?"

From the fruit of orange, he extracted a juice which would soften steak—here was the first meat tenderizer!

Praise embarrassed him. Nor would he accept credit for his work. "If I were not here, God would find someone else to do His work!" he said.

He was showered with awards. The Simpson College conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science. The Royal Society of Arts, London, elected him a Fellow. For distinguished work in Agricultural Chemistry, he was awarded the Springarn Medal by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People in 1923.

The University of Rochester, in 1941, conferred on him the D.Sc. degree. He also received the Theodore Roosevelt Medal. The citation

said : " For distinguished service in the field of science, to a scientist humbly seeking the guidance of God and a liberator to the men of the white race as well as the black."

More awards followed. Famous men offered him jobs on huge salaries. Carver refused them all. " I promised Booker I would remain in Tuskegee," he said, " and I shall do so." He did not want to serve any one individual but all mankind. Besides, he was not interested in money.

" All he needed was a cot upon which to lie and rest, God's earth from which to draw all sustaining strength, the sunshine and the dew-drops, a sheltered place in which to dream, to plan and improve the world, to make it a better place to live in."

The Prince of Sweden came to visit him and was charmed with Carver. Thomas Edison and Henry Ford became his close friends. Ford spent many happy hours in Carver's company. Carver was the man with ideas. Ford had the money and drive to put them into practice. Together they revolutionized industry.

Carver corresponded with Mahatma Gandhi, working out a well-balanced and simple diet for the frail Indian leader.

Carver was invited to speak at symposiums, science groups, clubs and chambers of commerce. Most people wondered what a Negro was going to tell them that they didn't know—but once he had begun to speak, people listened to him with respect. Most of them were ashamed of their own lack of knowledge! His talks were always frank, direct, and heart-warming.

To raise funds for the Institute, he held piano concerts, touring all over the country. Many listened spellbound to his beautiful ringing voice, full of pathos and beauty, coming from within the depths of his own being. Some wept openly.

In spite of all this, he was not allowed to eat, stay or move about in many places because the segregation laws were very strict in Alabama.

At the end of hectic days, haggard and exhausted, he had to trudge

for many miles before he found a place to rest his weary limbs. On hot, scorching days he had to climb all the way down to the basements of buildings to drink water at fountains marked "coloured".

With great tolerance, he bore all these indignities. He was not here to hate, or fight for every insult done to him. 'If I let myself resent these things, I will have no strength for anything else,' he thought.

"Did Jesus himself not suffer in silence?" he asked his students. But back at Tuskegee Institute, he was really happy and at home. The insults faded and he felt revived and ready to return to work. Together Booker and Carver had bred a new generation of Negroes, more independent, more confident, ready to take their place in society with each graduation day at the Institute.

Their great dream for their people was slowly coming true. Carver remembered Aunt Mariah's words. Well, he had done his bit to share his learning with his people.

Till the very last, Carver continued to work, rising at dawn and working far into the dusk. Austin Curtis, who came to work as his assistant, was a bright youngster with a great regard and respect for the ageing Professor. He became the son Carver never had. He accompanied the old man wherever he went, shielding him from the crowds, helping the Professor in all his work.

On January 5, 1943 Carver died peacefully. The end came when, propped in bed, he was painting a Christmas card which said, "Peace on earth and goodwill to all men." His death was characteristic of him and his entire life's work.

Carver's death was mourned by everyone, rich and poor, black and white, young and old. People walked for miles, forgetting hunger and cold, to have a last glimpse of their beloved teacher—God's own good man.

Messages poured in from all parts of the world. President Roosevelt wrote that he had counted it a privilege to have known him. Henry Wallace, the Vice President, remembered the tall, dark man who had

led him by the hand and explained to him the secrets of plants and flowers. "The United States," he said, "has lost one of its finest Christian gentlemen."

And many poor men and women, who had no tributes or words to offer, stood in silence by the grave, tears streaming down their cheeks.

The world had become a poorer place.

A George Washington Carver National Monument was built at Diamond Grove, Missouri, where George had spent his childhood.

When the monument was dedicated, the New York Herald Tribune wrote: "Dr. Carver as everyone knows was a Negro. But he triumphed over every obstacle. Perhaps there is no one in this century whose example has done more to promote a better understanding between the races. Such greatness partakes of the eternal. Dr. Carver did more than find the hidden merits in peanut and sweet potato. He helped to enlarge the American spirit." No single man had done so much for mankind.

Carver was buried on the campus beside Booker. His epitaph reads: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither he found happiness and honour in being helpful to the world."

A little Negro boy had proved in his lifetime that the human spirit cannot be vanquished. By his own courage and determination he overcame every obstacle, be it poverty, prejudice, race or colour, that society is riddled with.

From time to time great men are born, who leave their footprints on the sands of time. Their lives serve as guiding lights through the generations. George Washington Carver was one such.